

*Irwin Allen Ginsberg (/ˈɡɪnzbərg/; June 3, 1926 – April 5, 1997) was an American poet and one of the leading figures of both the Beat Generation of the 1950s and the counterculture that soon would follow. He vigorously opposed militarism, economic materialism and sexual repression. Ginsberg is best known for his epic poem "Howl", in which he denounced what he saw as the destructive forces of capitalism and conformity in the United States.*

*In 1957, "Howl" attracted widespread publicity when it became the subject of an obscenity trial, as it depicted heterosexual and homosexual sex at a time when sodomy laws made homosexual acts a crime in every U.S. state. "Howl" reflected Ginsberg's own homosexuality and his relationships with a number of men, including Peter Orlovsky, his lifelong partner. Judge Clayton W. Horn ruled that "Howl" was not obscene, adding, "Would there be any freedom of press or speech if one must reduce his vocabulary to vapid innocuous euphemisms?"*

*Ginsberg was a practicing Buddhist who studied Eastern religious disciplines extensively. He lived modestly, buying his clothing in second-hand stores and residing in downscale apartments in New York's East Village.*

*Ginsberg took part in decades of non-violent political protest against everything from the Vietnam War to the War on Drugs.*

#### **from "Wichita Vortex Sutra" (1966)**

I'm an old man now, and a lonesome man in Kansas  
but not afraid  
to speak my lonesomeness in a car,  
because not only my lonesomeness  
it's Ours, all over America,  
O tender fellows--  
& spoken lonesomeness is Prophecy  
in the moon 100 years ago or in  
the middle of Kansas now.  
It's not the vast plains mute our mouths  
that fill at midnite with ecstatic language  
when our trembling bodies hold each other  
breast to breast on a mattress--  
Not the empty sky that hides  
the feeling from our faces  
nor our skirts and trousers that conceal  
the bodylove emanating in a glow of beloved skin,  
white smooth abdomen down to the hair  
between our legs,  
It's not a God that bore us that forbid  
our Being, like a sunny rose  
all red with naked joy  
between our eyes & bellies, yes  
All we do is for this frightened thing  
we call Love, want and lack--

fear that we aren't the one whose body could be  
beloved of all the brides of Kansas City,  
kissed all over by every boy of Wichita--  
O but how many in their solitude weep aloud like me--  
On the bridge over the Republican River  
almost in tears to know  
how to speak the right language--  
on the frosty broad road  
uphill between highway embankments  
I search for the language  
that is also yours--  
almost all our language has been taxed by war.  
Radio antennae high tension  
wires ranging from Junction City across the plains--  
highway cloverleaf sunk in a vast meadow  
lanes curving past Abilene  
to Denver filled with old  
heroes of love--  
to Wichita where McClure's mind  
burst into animal beauty  
drunk, getting laid in a car  
in a neon misted street  
15 years ago--  
to Independence where the old man's still alive  
who loosed the bomb that's slaved all human consciousness  
and made the body universe a place of fear--  
Now, speeding along the empty plain,  
no giant demon machine  
visible on the horizon  
but tiny human trees and wooden houses at the sky's edge  
I claim my birthright!  
reborn forever as long as Man  
in Kansas or other universe--Joy  
reborn after the vast sadness of War Gods!  
A lone man talking to myself, no house in the brown vastness to hear,  
imaging the throng of Selves  
that make this nation one body of Prophecy  
languaged by Declaration as  
Happiness!  
I call all Powers of imagination  
to my side in this auto to make Prophecy,  
all Lords  
of human kingdoms to come  
Shambu Bharti Baba naked covered with ash  
Khaki Baba fat-bellied mad with the dogs  
Dehorahava Baba who moans Oh how wounded, How wounded  
Sitaram Onkar Das Thakur who commands  
give up your desire  
Satyananda who raises two thumbs in tranquility  
Kali Pada Guha Roy whose yoga drops before the void

Shivananda who touches the breast and says OM  
Srimata Krishnaji of Brindaban who says take for your guru  
William Blake the invisible father of English visions  
Sri Ramakrishna master of ecstasy eyes  
half closed who only cries for his mother  
Chaitanya arms upraised singing & dancing his own praise  
merciful Chango judging our bodies  
Durga-Ma covered with blood  
destroyer of battlefield illusions  
million-faced Tathagata gone past suffering  
Preserver Harekrishna returning in the age of pain  
Sacred Heart my Christ acceptable  
Allah the Compassionate One  
Jahweh Righteous One  
all Knowledge-Princes of Earth-man, all  
ancient Seraphim of heavenly Desire, Devas, yogis  
& holymen I chant to--  
Come to my lone presence  
into this Vortex named Kansas,  
I lift my voice aloud,  
make Mantra of American language now,  
I here declare the end of the War!  
Ancient days' Illusion!  
and pronounce words beginning my own millennium.  
Let the States tremble,  
let the Nation weep,  
let Congress legislate it own delight  
let the President execute his own desire--  
this Act done by my own voice,  
nameless Mystery--  
published to my own senses,  
blissfully received by my own form  
approved with pleasure by my sensations  
manifestation of my very thought  
accomplished in my own imagination  
all realms within my consciousness fulfilled  
60 miles from Wichita  
near El Dorado,  
The Golden One,  
in chill earthly mist  
houseless brown farmland plains rolling heavenward  
in every direction  
one midwinter afternoon Sunday called the day of the Lord--  
Pure Spring Water gathered in one tower  
where Florence is  
set on a hill,  
stop for tea & gas